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The concept of succession evasion: An invisible behavior in the organization

Tahmine Salehi, Mansoureh Ashghali-Farahani, Mohammadsaeed Mirzaee

Abstract:

BACKGROUND: The opposite of succession planning is a new concept called succession evasion; A deep understanding of this concept helps to correct the training process of competent staff in nursing management. This study was conducted with the aim of explaining succession evasion as a new concept in nursing management; Also, as an invisible aspect of organizational behavior in the field of management.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: The current research was conducted using a qualitative approach and conventional content analysis methods. The participants included nursing managers selected using the purposeful sampling method based on the entry and exit criteria. The code of research ethics and required permits were received. The method of semi-structured interviews was used to collect data, and the time of the interviews varied between 39 and 90 minutes. All data was recorded and transcribed. The method proposed by Graneheim and Lundman was used for data analysis. Guba and Lincoln's criteria were used for the accuracy and robustness of the data. MAXQDA software was used for data management.

RESULT: The subcategories related to succession planning included "Fear of succession planning," "Talent suppression," "Belief in the permanence of the position," and "Obstructing the growth of others."

CONCLUSION: Succession evasion as an undesirable organizational behavior had four primary categories, fear of succession planning, talent suppression, belief in-Position stability, and obstruction to the growth of others. It is recommended to use the findings of this study in the context of further explanation of the concept of succession evasion as the opposite of succession planning in future research, and also, to use this concept for planning nursing management.

Keywords:

Nursing management, succession evasion, succession planning

Introduction

The development of today's technologies, globalization, and the need to respond quickly to environmental changes and reduce costs in the scene of intense competition, intensify the necessity of succession planning in organizations.^[1] Considering the importance of succession planning, only 10% of healthcare organizations have an official succession planning program in the organization.^[2] Studies show that the healthcare system is lagging behind other industries in the field of training management talent.^[1] Also, studies show that organizations pay little attention to the issue

of leadership and management in nursing.^[3,4] The lack of preparation for talented people to be replaced is the biggest challenge in the field of nursing management.^[5,6] This is despite the fact that the implementation of succession planning has many positive consequences. Some of these consequences include reducing the costs of replacing people in managerial positions and positions in nursing, improving clinical outcomes for patients, improving nurses' understanding of the effectiveness of nursing managers' performance, and improving the self-confidence of nursing managers.^[7] Reid and Gilmour argue that effective succession planning requires management development at all levels, program commitment, and positive

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School of Nursing and
Midwifery, Iran University
of Medical Sciences,
Tehran, Iran

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Mohammadsaeed
Mirzaee,
School of Nursing
and Midwifery, Iran
University of Medical
Sciences, Tehran, Iran.
E-mail: Saeedmiraee75@
gmail.com

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communication. Furthermore, attention should be given to identifying competency models and their various aspects in healthcare organizations' succession planning.^[8] Forward-looking organizations require competent managers to navigate future changes. Delegating authority to talented employees is a common practice in such organizations.^[9] Competent managers are valuable human capital and play a pivotal role in organizational progress.^[10] If management activities within an organization are delegated to competent individuals, it leads to organizational growth and the development of skilled managers.^[11] Delegating authority involves distributing work and responsibility among talented individuals, which stands in contrast to the concept of succession evasion.^[12] Given the significant harm caused by the appointment of incompetent managers, it is crucial to minimize wasteful expenses resulting from incorrect selections and losses incurred by dismissing qualified managers.^[13] Health organizations dedicated to improving healthcare are not exempt from these management changes.^[14] Conversely, managers with a negative mindset often seek to suppress their talented employees.^[15] They are hesitant to identify and train talented individuals because they perceive them as a threat to their own positions.^[16] Obstructive managers fear losing their positions and view talented individuals as significant threats to themselves and their positions.^[17] Managers' resistance to hiring competent and capable individuals as their successors poses a significant challenge within organizations, which can be viewed as negative behavior.^[18] It is worth noting that there is a lack of available evidence regarding the concept of succession evasion. The research gap in this study is related to the field of management as one of the essential professional roles in nursing because it has not received sufficient attention regarding the issue of training competent managers. However, the study recognizes the crucial and effective role of succession planning in ensuring the selection of competent managers. The guiding philosophy of research in this study was based on a naturalistic worldview to explore and elucidate the experiences of individuals. Furthermore, based on the researcher's experiences and understanding of the organizational implications, this study, which was part of a nursing doctorate thesis, elucidated the concept of succession evasion as an unseen aspect of organizational behavior.

The aim of this study was to introduce and elucidate the concept of "Succession Evasion" in nursing management.

Research question based on the SPIDER format

"What are the experiences of nursing managers regarding succession evasion in Iran?" Sample (Nursing manager), Phenomenon of Interest (Succession evasion), Design (Interviews), Evaluation (Experiences), Research type (Conventional Qualitative study).^[19]

Material and Methods

Study design and setting

A qualitative research approach was employed, utilizing the conventional content analysis method. The research was conducted in public hospitals and nursing schools in Iran.

Study participants and sampling

The participants in this research consisted of 15 nursing managers at various levels in Iran, who had sufficient experience in the field of succession planning. The participants were selected using the purposeful sampling method, and sampling continued until data saturation was achieved. Data saturation in this study refers to the point at which no new data was obtained, indicating that the data collection process had reached its maximum capacity. Inclusion criteria for participation in the study included age 35 and above, the ability to speak Persian and management experience, having significant experience in succession planning, literacy in reading and writing, effective communication skills, and availability for an interview. Exclusion criteria included unwillingness to participate and limited cooperation.

Data collection tools and technique

In this study, data was collected through semi-structured interviews.^[20] Sampling was conducted for a duration of 10 months. The duration of the interviews ranged from 39 to 90 minutes. The participants' preferences determined the location and timing of the interviews, which were conducted either face-to-face or virtually using Skype and WhatsApp. The initial question posed at the beginning of each interview was "Please explain your definition of succession planning?" Probing and follow-up questions, such as "Could you provide an example?" were used to gather more data and gain deeper insights into the experiences of the managers. All interviews were recorded with the participant's permission and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Written consent was obtained from the participants for recording their voices. To manage the data, MAXQDA 10 series software was used, ensuring confidentiality and privacy.

The data analysis in this study employed the method proposed by Graneheim and Lundman,^[21] which involved six steps. Firstly, all interviews were transcribed verbatim. Secondly, the text from the interviews and accompanying notes were considered as the unit of analysis. In the third step, the researcher read the transcribed texts multiple times, highlighting important sections and treating them as semantic units. Similar semantic units were then grouped together. In the fourth step, coding was used to assign new abstract concepts to the semantic units. In the fifth step, the codes obtained

were organized into primary classes and subclasses based on their similarities and differences, utilizing constant comparison. Each subclass was assigned a title and a new label. Finally, in the sixth step, the obtained subclasses were compared in-depth, leading to the identification of the main classes [Table 1].

The criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985) were employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the data, encompassing credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.^[22] To establish credibility, the researcher had extensive involvement with the data collection and analysis, maintaining regular contact with the participants. To ensure transferability, the researcher meticulously conducted each step of the study, providing comprehensive details and continuously comparing the data. For dependability, the data was made accessible to peers, and the researcher reviewed the obtained codes during the coding process. Additionally, two qualitative study experts examined the codes for further verification. To validate the study's findings, participants were asked multiple questions during the interview, and the results were returned to them for confirmation.

Ethical consideration

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and the necessary ethical permissions were obtained. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their information. The principle of participants' independence to withdraw from the study at any time was respected. It is important to note that this study is part of the results of a nursing doctorate thesis in Iran.

Results

The study included 15 nursing managers (from A to O) in Iran. Table 2 provides information on the demographic characteristics of the participants [Table 2]. Most participants were employed and had managerial experience in various nursing management categories. The concept of "succession evasion" emerged as one of the primary classes related to the broader and more abstract class of "succession planning" in our main study. Based on the research findings, succession evasion, as an undesirable organizational behavior, can be categorized into four subcategories, "Fear of succession planning," "talent

Table 1: Data analysis steps in this study

Steps	Details
Step 1	Transcribing the interviews.
Step 2	Identifying the unit of analysis.
Step 3	Identifying and highlighting meaningful units.
Step 4	Coding the identified units.
Step 5	Continuously compare and create primary classes and subclasses.
Step 6	Develop main classes.

suppression," "Belief in the permanence of the position," and "Obstructing the growth of others" [Table 3].

Fear of succession planning

According to the participants, some managers are afraid of relinquishing their positions and being replaced by competent individuals. Managers tend to engage in succession evasion due to the fear of their colleagues overtaking their roles. The participants emphasized that the fear of capable and competent successors entering the organization is a significant factor contributing to managers' succession evasion.

D114: "Managers, due to the fear of losing their own positions, hinder the implementation of succession planning".

K132: "Some managers are afraid of being criticized by others if they implement succession planning".

O143: "As a result of the fear and ambition of managers, management positions are left vacant, depriving deserving individuals from entering those role".

Talent suppression

The participants revealed that managers practicing succession evasion suppress managerial talent within the organization. These ineffective managers, due to their autocratic tendencies, fail to recognize the value of hiring competent individuals. Managers engaged in succession evasion actively reject dynamic individuals within the organization or disregard the abilities of competent employees.

D74: "One of the reasons and obstacles to succession planning is that individuals are suppressed by managers".

G68: "If managers show disregard towards competent employees, it can lead to the suppression of their talents".

Belief in the permanence of the position

The study participants expressed their belief that managers' perception of the enduring nature of their managerial career hinders the implementation of succession planning and serves as the foundation for succession evasion. Some managers expect their tenure in a managerial role to be lengthy. The perception of permanent management appears to stem from egoistic motives, ultimately preventing the entry of competent individuals into managerial positions.

A10: "It is believed that many managers think their tenure in leadership positions should be prolonged".

H30: "Unfortunately, some managers believe that their tenure in leadership positions should be permanent".

Table 2: The demographic characteristics of the participants

Id	Cod	Sex	Age	Marriage	Level of education	Employment status	Position	Work experience (years)	Management experience (years)	Interview duration (min)	Type of interview	Was there a follow-up interview?
1	A	Female	50	Married	MS	Retired	Hospital nursing director	25	15	80	Face to face	Yes
2	B	Male	53	Single	Ph.D.	Employed	Director of hospital nursing at the university	31	22	50	Face to face	Yes
3	C	Male	40	Married	Ph.D.	Employed	Hospital nursing director	16	8	90	Face to face	Yes
4	D	Male	62	Married	MS	Employed	Clinical Supervisor	31	29	65	Virtual	NO
5	E	Female	52	Married	BSc	Employed	Hospital nursing director	28	18	60	Virtual	NO
6	F	Male	46	Married	MS	Employed	Clinical supervisor	22	11	40	Face to face	NO
7	G	Female	58	Married	BSc	Employed	Hospital nursing director	26	10	45	Virtual	Yes
8	H	Male	54	Married	MS	Employed	Clinical supervisor	32	6	55	Face to face	Yes
9	I	Male	47	Single	Ph.D.	Employed	Clinical supervisor	17	10	45	Face to face	NO
10	J	Male	54	Married	Ph.D.	Employed	Hospital nursing director	32	10	42	Face to face	NO
11	K	Male	54	Married	Ph.D.	Employed	Clinical supervisor	33	15	39	Face to face	NO
12	L	Male	56	Married	Ph.D.	Employed	Clinical supervisor	35	16	50	Virtual	NO
13	M	Female	58	Married	Ph.D.	Retired	Director of Nursing, Ministry of Health	67	60	70	Face to face	NO
14	N	Female	50	Married	Ph.D.	Employed	Clinical supervisor	25	5	45	Face to face	NO
15	O	Female	47	Married	MS	Employed	Clinical supervisor	24	3	80	Virtual	NO

Table 3: Codes, primary category, and subcategory related to succession evasion

Main category	Subcategory	Primary category	Cods
Succession planning barriers	Succession evasion	Fear of succession planning	B85: <i>Fear of competent individuals assuming positions of authority.</i> E68: <i>Fear of the current manager being replaced or dismissed from their role.</i> G119: <i>Fear of encountering capable and competitive individuals.</i> I33: <i>Managers' fear of their colleagues surpassing them in their positions.</i> D74: <i>Self-driven managers contribute to the suppression of talent.</i> G68: <i>Suppression of managerial talent.</i>
		Talents suppression	A10: <i>Belief in the longevity of one's managerial tenure.</i> H29 and N7: <i>Stability in the duration of managerial roles.</i> H30: <i>Expectation of holding a managerial position for a lifetime.</i> J119: <i>Persistence in maintaining managerial roles.</i> M13: <i>Perceiving management as a permanent status.</i>
		Belief in the permanence of the position	J22: <i>Impeding employee growth and development.</i> I87: <i>Obstructing the progress of deserving individuals versus promoting them.</i> G49: <i>Managers acting as barriers to the advancement of exceptional staff members.</i> H24: <i>Managers blocking the path to employee advancement.</i>
		Obstructing the growth of others	

J119: "There is a mistaken perception that managerial positions are permanent and everlasting".

Obstructing the growth of others

According to the study participants, managers engaged in succession evasion actively impede the development of competent individuals. These managers take deliberate actions to impede the growth of talented employees. Succession evasion managers pose obstacles to the advancement of capable individuals, resulting in a lack of organizational development. They act as

barriers to the progress of hardworking and talented managers.

J22: "Many individuals within organizations hinder the growth of deserving nurses".

H324: "Perhaps a fundamental obstacle to succession planning is blocking the growth path for capable nurses".

Definition of Succession evasion concept

Succession evasion refers to the mindset and perspective

of upper level managers, as well as the existing conditions and policies within an organization, which hinder the presence of qualified and capable individuals from acquiring key positions in nursing.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that succession evasion encompasses four subcategories: fear of succession, suppression of talent, belief in the permanence of managerial positions, and impeding the growth of others. The study concludes that succession evasion represents a concealed aspect of undesirable organizational behavior, and it stands in contrast to succession planning. This research introduces succession evasion as a novel dimension within the realm of management and organizational behavior. The study further concludes that managers' apprehension towards succession planning and the potential loss of their positions contribute to the occurrence of succession evasion. Some managers are reluctant to relinquish their positions acquired through personal connections.^[23] Managers harbor a fear that talented and competent individuals will surpass them and assume managerial positions.^[24] As a result, inept managers tend to overlook the capable employees within the organization.^[25] Furthermore, the fear of others' competence hinders the delegation of authority to capable employees.^[26] This study reveals that apprehensive managers make efforts to hold onto their positions.^[27] The attachment some managers have toward their positions proves to be a negative factor in the implementation of succession planning.^[18] The study findings highlight that the suppression of talent by nursing managers contributes to the occurrence of succession evasion. The study identifies factors such as jealousy, a sense of competition, and the personal biases of managers as reasons for the suppression of talent. As long as incompetent managers continue to disregard the managerial talents within the organization, the implementation of succession planning remains unlikely.^[28] Incompetent managers create an environment that fosters the proliferation of mediocrity.^[29] Such circumstances pave the way for the influx of inept employees into managerial roles.^[30] While ineffective managers believe they are effectively leading the organization, they actually oppress competent employees.^[31] The study findings also reveal that another factor contributing to succession planning avoidance is the belief among certain managers that their managerial positions are permanent and unchangeable. This study concludes that unsuccessful managers perceive their managerial tenure as permanent. When managers view their positions as permanent, it often leads to a lack of creativity and limited rotation of managers within the organization.^[32] Managers who insist on the permanence of their positions create an environment

that hinders the growth of competent employees.^[33] Ineffective managers, akin to spiders, seek to monopolize everything for themselves and view the managerial position as a personal possession. Their primary focus lies in maintaining their managerial status rather than prioritizing the organization. Inefficient managers employ power dynamics and alliances to solidify their position.^[34] They strive to cling to their managerial roles^[35] and may even betray their deserving colleagues to safeguard their position.^[36] Obstructing the growth of others is another factor contributing to succession evasion by managers. The support of ineffective managers by incompetent and weak individuals in obtaining positions serves as a significant barrier to succession. Unsuccessful managers employ lobbying and favoritism to back their associates, delegating tasks to them with the intention of promoting them to managerial roles in the future. These managers impede the progress and development of capable employees. This study emphasizes that the avoidance of succession planning contradicts the fundamental principles of the process itself. Managers who avoid succession planning hinder the process of identifying and acknowledging talented individuals within the organization. This impediment prevents the organization from effectively recognizing and utilizing the skills and potential of capable employees. Avoidance of succession planning hinders the effective delegation of authority to competent employees and impedes their training for future leadership roles. One limitation of this research is the lack of available evidence on the topic of substitutability, which the researcher attempted to address by conducting a thorough literature search for accurate information in this area. Another limitation of this study was the potential interference of interview scheduling with the participants' work conditions. The researcher conducted the interviews based on the participants' requests and coordination.

Conclusion

The findings of this research, based on the experiences of nursing managers, reveal that succession evasion is a novel managerial concept and an invisible component of organizational behavior. Succession evasion is a new concept that has been introduced based on the clarification and transparency of participants' experiences and beliefs as a counterpoint to succession planning. Succession evasion managers serve as the primary hindrance to the effective implementation of systematic succession planning. Succession evasion represents a significant and detrimental aspect of organizational behavior, impeding the identification, development, and placement of talented individuals within the nursing field. The failure to appoint competent employees to managerial positions due to avoidance of succession planning results in organizational stagnation and deviates from the system's

goals and objectives. Succession evasion managers possess comprehensive knowledge of the conditions that favor their own advantage, and they are well aware of the duration of their management positions. Introducing succession evasion as a new management concept can help address the uncertainties surrounding the negative aspects of managers' organizational behavior. Awareness of succession evasion enhances the accuracy and focus of managers in implementing succession planning correctly. We recommend utilizing the findings of this study to foster in-depth and applied research, as well as the development of tools for precise measurement of succession evasion. This will enable drawing educational and management perspectives to rectify organizational behaviors.

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Ethical consideration

This research has the ethics code number IR.IUMS.REC.1400.1080 from Iran University of Medical Sciences.

Author contributions

The study was designed by T. S. and M. F. Data collection was carried out by M. S. M. under the supervision of T. S. Data analysis was conducted by M. S. M. and T. S. under the supervision of M. F. Finally, the final report of the study was prepared by M. S. M. and edited by T. S. and M. F.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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